

Textus.

PAULIN, a counsellor of Rome, the riches of the whiche Paulin the houndes of the palays, that is to seyn, the officers, wolden han devoured by hope and covetise, yit drow I him out of the jowes (sc. faucibus) of hem that gapeden. And for as moche as the peyne of the accusacioun ajuged biforn ne sholde nat sodeintly berten ne punisshen wrongfully Albin, a counsellor of Rome, I putte me ayeins the hates and indignaciouns of the accuser Ciprian. Is it nat thanne ynough yseyn, that I have purchased grete discordes ayeins myself? But I oughte be the more assured ayeins alle othere folk (s. Ro. mayns), that for the love of rightwisesse I ne reserved never nothing to myself to hemward of the kinges halle, sc. officers, by the whiche I were the more siker. But thorough tho same accusors accusinge, I am condempned. Of the noumbir of the whiche accusors oon Basilus, that whylom was chased out of the kinges service, is now compelled in accusinge of myname, for nede of foreine moneye. Also Opilion and Gaudencius han accused me, al be it so that the justice regal hadde whylom demed hem bothe to go into exil for hir trecheries and fraudes withoute noumbir. To whiche jugement they nolden nat obeye, but defendeden hem by the sikernes of holy houses, that is to seyn, fledden into seintuaries; and whan this was aperceived to the king, he comaundede, that but they voidede the citee of Ravenne by certain day assigned, that men sholde merken hem on the forheved with an hoot yren & chasen hem out of the toun. Now what thing, semeth thee, mighte ben lykned to this crueltie? For certes, thilke same day was received the accusinge of myname by thilke same accusors. What may ben seid herto? (quasi diceret, nichil). Hath my studie and my cunninge deserved thus; or elles the forseide dampnacioun of me, made that hem rightful accusors or no? (quasi diceret, non). Was not fortune ashamed of this? Certes, al hadde nat fortune ben ashamed that innocence was accused, yit oughte she han had shame of the filthe of myne accusours.

BUT, axestow in somme, of what gilt I am accused? men seyn that I wolde save the companye of the senatours. And desirest thou to heren in what manere? I am accused that I sholde han destourbed the accuser to beren lettres, by whiche he sholde han makid the senatours guilty ayeins the kinges real majestee. O maistresse, what demestow of this? Shal I forsake this blame, that I ne be no shame to thee? (quasi diceret, non). Certes,

I have wold it, that is to seyn, the savacioun of the senat, ne I shal never leten to but the entente of the accuser to be destourbed shal cese. for shal I clepe it sired the savacioun of the ordre of the certes yit hadde thilke same senat don by me, thorough hir decrets & hir jugements, as though it were a sinne or a felonie; that is to seyn, to wilne the savacioun of hem himself, may not chaunge the merite of things. Ne I trowe nat, by the jugement of Socrates, that it were lefevil to me to hyde the sothe, ne assente to lesinges. But certes, how so ever it be of this, I putte it to gessen or preisen to the jugement of thee & of wyse folk. Of whiche thing al the ordinaunce & the sothe, for as moche as folke that ben to comen after our dayes shullen knowen it, I have put it in scripture and in remembrance. for touching the lettres falsly makid, by whiche lettres I am accused to han hoped the freedom of Rome, what apertenech me to speke therof? Of whiche lettres the fraude hadde ben shewed apertly, yif I hadde had libertee for to han used & ben at the confessioun of myne accusours, the whiche thing in alle nedes hath greet strengthe, for what other freedom may men hopen? Certes, I wolde that som other freedom mighte ben hoped. I wolde thanne han answered by the wordes of a man that highte Canius; for whan he was accused by Gaius Cesar, Germeynes sone, that he (Canius) was knowinge and consenting of a conjuracioun ymakid ayeins him (sc. Gaius), this Canius answered thus: Yif I hadde wist it, thou haddest nat wist it. In which thing some hath nat so dilled my wit, that I pleyne only that shrewede folk aparailen felonies ayeins vertu; but I wondre greetly how that they may performe things that they hadde hoped for to don. forwhy, to wilne shrewednesse, that comth peraventure of oure defaute; but it is lyk a monstre and amervaille, how that, in the present sighte of God, may ben achieved and performed swiche things as every felonous man hath conceived in his thought ayeins innocents. for which thing oon of thy famileres nat unskilfully axed thus: Yif God is, whennes comen wikkede thinges? And yif God ne is, whennes comen gode thinges? But al hadde it ben lefevil that felonous folk, that now desiren the blood & the deeth of alle gode men and eek of alle the senat, han wilned to gon destroyen me, whom they han seyn alwey batailen & defenden gode men and eek al the senat, yit had I nat desu-

served of the faderes, that is to seyn, of the senatours, that they sholden wilne my destruccioun.

BUT remembreth wel, as I gesse, that whan I wolde doon or seyn any thing, thou thyself, alwey present, rewledest me. At the city of Verone, whan that the king, gredy of comune slaughter, caste him to transporten up al the ordre of the senat the gilt that Albin was majestee, of the whiche gret sikernes of peril accused, with how gret sikernes of peril to me defendede I al the senat! Thou wost wel that I seye sooth, ne I ne avaunte me never in preysinge of myself. for alwey, whan any wight receiveth precious renoun in avauntinge himself of his werkes, he amenuseth the secree of his conscience. But now thou mayst wel seen to what ende I am comen for myne innocence; I receive peyne of fals felonie for guerdon of veray vertu. And what open confessioun of felonye hadde ever juges so acordaunt in crueltie, that is to seyn, as myn accusinge hath, that either error of mannes wit or elles condicioun of fortune, that is uncertein to alle mortal folk, ne submittede some of hem, that is to seyn, that it ne enclynede som juge to han pitee or compassioun? for althogh I hadde ben accused that I wolde brenne holy houses, and strangle preestes with wikkede swerde, or that I hadde greythed deeth to al gode men, al-gates the sentence sholde han punisshed me, present, confessed, or convict. But now I am remewed fro the citee of Rome almost fyve hundred thousand pas, I am withoute defence dampned to proscriptioun and to the deeth, for the studie and bountees that I have doon to the senat. But O, wel ben they worthy of merite (as who seith, nay), ther mighte never yit non of hem be convict of swiche blame as myne is! Of whiche trespas, myne accusours sayen ful wel the dignitee; the whiche dignitee, for they wolden derken it with medeling of som felonie, they baren me on hand, and lyeden, that I hadde polut and defouled my conscience with sacrilege, for covetise of dignitee. And certes, thou thyself, that are plaunted in me, chacedest out of the sege of my corage al covetise of mortal thinges; ne sacrilege hadde no leve to han a place in me biforn thyne eyen. for thou droppedest every day in myne eres and in my thought thilke comaundement of Pictagoras, that is to seyn, men shal serve to Godde, & not to goddes. Ne it was nat convenient, ne no nede, to taken help of the foulest spirites; I, that thou hast ordeined & set in swiche excellence that thou makdest me lyk to God. And over this, the right clene secree chaumbre of myne

hous, that is to seyn, my wyf, & the companye of myn honest freendes, and my wyves fader, as wel holy as worthy to ben revered thorough his owne dedes, defenden me from alle suspicioun of swich blame. But O malice! for they that accusen me taken of thee, Philosophie, feith of so gret blame! for they trowen that I have had affinitee to malefice or enchauntement, bycause that I am replenished and fulfilled with thy techinges, and enformed of thy maneres. And thus it suffiseth not only, that thy reverence ne availe me not, but yif that thou, of thy free wille, rather be blemished with myn offencioun. But certes, to the harmes that I have, ther bitydeth yit this encrees of harm, that the gessinge & the jugement of moche folk ne looken nothing to the desertes of thinges, but only to the aventure of fortune; and jugen that only swiche thinges ben purveyed of God, whiche that temporel welefulnesse commendeth.

Glose. As thus: that, yif a wight have prosperitee, he is a good man and worthy to han that prosperitee; and whoso hath adversitee, he is a wikked man, and God hath forsake him, and he is worthy to han that adversitee. This is the opinioun of some folk.

AND therof comth that good gessinge, first of alle thing, forsaketh wrecches: certes, it greveth me to thinke right now the dyverse sentences that the poeple seith of me. And thus moche I seye, that the last charge of contrarious fortune is this: that, whan that any blame is leyd upon a caitif, men wenen that he hath deserved that he suffreth. And I, that am put away fro gode men, and despoiled of dignitees, & defouled of my name by gessinge, have suffred torment for my goddedes. Certes, mesemeth that I see the felonous covines of wikked men habounden in joye and in gladnesse. And I see that every lorel shapeth him to finde out newe fraudes for to accuse gode folk. And I see that gode men beth overthrowen for drede of my peril; & every luxurious tourmentour dar doon alle felonie unpunished & ben excited therto by yiftes; and innocents ne ben not only despoiled of sikernes but of defence; and therefore me list to cryen to God in this wyse:

Metre V.

O stelliferi conditor orbis.

THOU maker of the whele that bereth the sterres, which that art yfastned to thy perdurable chayer, and tornest the hevne with a ravissing sweigh, and constreinst the